

Unit 6: Religion and East Asian Politics

Objectives

At the end of this unit, you will

Be aware of the following

- Prevailing influence of Buddhist practice in Southeast Asia politics
- Impact the Sangha increasingly plays in Southeast Asia politics
- Disestablishment of monastic orders in Laos and Cambodia over the past 20 years
- Variety of educational means Confucius used to instill values within the Chinese people
- Five cultural visions of Confucian thought
- Worldwide composition of Islam
- Spread of Islam in Southeast Asia/Indian sub-continent
- Sunni and Shia school of thought, makeup/differences
- Sufi practice within Islam
- Complexities of Islam when applied to society
- Three Islamic political responses to the West

Identify

- Ashoka
- Stupa
- Dharma
- Sangha
- General Joseph W. Stilwell
- Te
- Syncretism, Dar al-Islam
- Sharia, hadith
- Ulama, imam, kethib, muezzin, mufti
- Mujahidun, mullahs, ayatollah
- Caliph, marabout
- Sunni, Shia, Sufi, Twelver
- Husayn, Karbala

Realize

- Nature of political leadership in Taoist thought
- Taoist ideal of passivity, yielding and adaptability
- Importance of cultural excellence, political engagement and personal character in Confucian thought
- Current influence of traditional Chinese Folk/Taoist/Confucian practice in the Peoples Republic of China internal politics
- Syncretistic nature of SE Asia Muslim practice
- Differences of leadership by nation/group within Islam
- Percentages of Sunni/Shia practitioners
- Fundamentalist, traditionalist and reformist trends of Islamic thought within Southeast Asia

I. Buddhism

"Buddhists must pursue 'not a will-o'-the-wisp Nirvana secluded in the cells of their monasteries, but a Nirvana attained here and now by a life of self-forgetful activity...'"

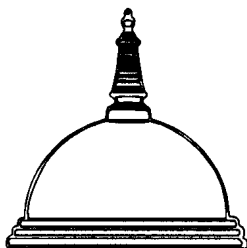
-- D. Wijewardena, The Revolt in the Temple, (as quoted in M. Eliade, The Encyclopedia of Religion, Vol. II, p. 586).

The "life of self-forgetful activity" referred to by Sri Lankan Buddhist D. Wijewardena includes that of political involvement. From King Ashoka (uh-SHOH-kuh) to the present, state leaders in Buddhist countries readily apply the Dharma to their national constituencies. The Sangha adds a significant political and social dimension.

Emperor Ashoka (274-236), in what might be seen as one of history's first recorded cases of "post traumatic stress syndrome", turned from "Ashoka the fierce" following his conquests during the Kalinga war.

During this series of battles in northern India, Ashoka's forces slaughtered 100,000, deported 150,000 and spread famine/pestilence. In part, the emperor's guilt or perhaps post trauma stress led him to embrace Buddhism. King Ashoka's positive example as "Ashoka the righteous" continues to influence political leaders in Buddhist countries today.

In Southeast Asia, leaders capitalize on the use of Buddhist symbols and influence.



For example, seats of power are often located near stupas (commemorative burial mounds), so that these memorials do not only give reverence to past spiritual leaders, but endorse present day leadership.

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In carrying out their duties, Buddhist leaders experience the tensions inherent in using power and authority while living up to the ideals of Buddhist practice. Even if they do not espouse distinctly Buddhist precepts, leaders are aware of its prevailing influence.

When asked why nations with large Buddhist populations so often have violent rulers, Myanmar's dissident Nobel Peace Prize winner Daw Aung San Suu Kyi answered: "...it is very difficult for us to explain why we should have violent governments in Buddhist countries because the governments themselves claim to be Buddhist!...[T]he conclusion one would have to come to is that perhaps [generals, government officials] are not practicing Buddhism anything like enough." ("The Passion of Suu Kyi", by Claudia Driefus, The New York Times Magazine, 7 Jan. 1996.)

The Sangha (Buddhist monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen), possessing numerical strength and respected by the laity, increasingly is called upon to exert political influence. In classic Buddhism, kings protected the Sangha, took an active role in promoting its welfare and sought to maintain high standards for those called to monastic life. In turn, the monastic orders gave formal and informal support for government rulers.

Today, especially in countries like Sri Lanka and Myanmar (Burma), frustration aroused by injustice leads to more active Sangha social involvement. In Cambodia (Kampuchea) and Laos, political leaders determined monastic orders to be either reactionary or developmental hindrances and, within the past two decades, disestablished them. Observers wonder how this will affect the long term survival of Buddhism in these countries.



Scholar Donald Swearer notes that throughout Southeast Asia, whether "the monk can continue to symbolize values of lasting significance embodied in the ideals of Buddhism and at the same time speak to the needs of societies in radical transition is a fundamental issue [for]...the very survival of this religious tradition as we have known it." (Buddhism and Society in Southeast Asia, p. 64.)

II. Taoist Political Thought

"The best of all rulers is but a shadowy presence to his subjects...Hesitant, he does not utter words lightly. When the task is accomplished and his works done, the people all say, 'It happened to us naturally.'"

--Tao Te Ching, Chapter 17 (translated by D.C. Lau, p. 73).

"Those skilled in war cultivate the Tao and preserve the laws and are therefore able to formulate victorious policies.

Tu Mu: The Tao is the way of humanity and justice; 'laws' are regulations and institutions. Those who excel in war first cultivate their own humanity and justice and maintain their laws and institutions. By these means they make their governments invincible."

--Sun Tzu, The Art of War, p. 88.



Society should emulate nature. Politically, the Taoist tradition, as identified in Tao Te Ching, took three metaphors and applied them to the nation.

1. Valley In patterning after nature's "valleys," Taoist rulers would look for the underlying principles, and the lowly individuals in their communities, rather than those who were prominent and impressive.

2. Female Traits identified with the Taoist ideal "female"--passivity, sense of yielding and adaptability--became government ideals.

Influence, not by direct assault but by indirection, nuance and suggestion became the model.

3. Block of Potential The "uncarved block," with its natural simplicity and capacity for infinite potential, pertained to society. Rather than 'fixing' society with confining rules, limiting regulations and excessive law, Taoists allowed society to realize its full capacity. "Te" (duh, "power") was to be conserved, and used efficiently, rather than with reckless inordinate abandon.

The Taoist ideal was not mindless docility or pacifism. It upgraded the position of women. It curtailed murder of female infants. It tolerated a regretful use of force in order to stop a greater evil.

Yet, underlying all was a sublime sense of the supernatural, an emphasis upon culture, and an allowance for all to pursue their inner space and natural attitude to life.

III. Confucian Political Thought

"Simply by being a good son and friendly to his brothers a man can exert an influence upon government."

-- Analects 5:26, (as recorded by Tu Wei-ming in Our Religions, p. 185.)

"Self cultivation of each person is the root of social order and that social order is the basis for political stability and universal peace..."



There are those who use their minds and there are those who use their muscles. The former govern; the latter are governed. Those who govern are supported by those who are governed."

-- Mencius III, A:4 (Our Religions, p. 187.)

"In the late twentieth century, Chinese political leaders...celebrate Confucianism as the source of Chinese progress. In the 1980s the Chinese government began to promote interest in Confucianism, with party leaders declaring it 'the mainstream' of Chinese culture."

-- Samuel Huntington, Clash of Civilizations, p. 106.

1. Social Setting

Involvement in life, immersion in the world, and acceptance of the call to duty characterized the lifestyle of Confucius.

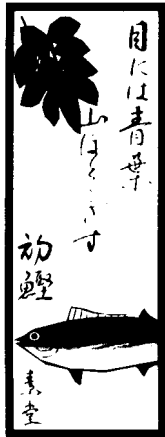
Confucius followed in the steps of Taoist thought. His concern with music, sensitivity to nature, and appreciation of simple life pleasures all continued the Taoist ideal.



Yet for Confucius, the problems his society faced--warring factions, social anarchy, people destroying each other--seemed to threaten the foundations of the body politic. Political engagement, rather than detachment, was necessary.

Alternatives propounded in Confucius' day--a utopian "love" ethic or realistic "life is hard" approach--advocated either pious proclamation or heavy-handed oppression and physical might. The dangers of oppressive rule are exemplified in the following narrative:

"One of the best known of all Confucian stories is of how on the lonely side of Mount T'ai, Confucius heard the mourning wail of a woman. Asked why she wept, she replied, 'My husband's father was killed here by a tiger, my husband also, and now my son has met the same fate.' 'Then why do you dwell in such a dreadful place?' Confucius asked. 'Because here there is no oppressive ruler,' the woman replied. 'Never forget, scholars,' said Confucius to his disciples, 'that an oppressive rule is more cruel than a tiger.'" (Huston Smith, The World's Religions, pp. 177-178.)



Confucius, obsessed with tradition, sought out the transcending values found in Chinese custom and practice. He identified procedures which developed correct attitudes.

Then, through a variety of educational means--temples, theaters, toys, proverbs, schools, history, stories, festivals and parades--he hoped to instill these values within the populace at large.

2. Five Cultural Visions Harvard professor of Chinese philosophy and history Tu Wei-ming identifies the following five Confucian cultural visions, each relating to political activity.

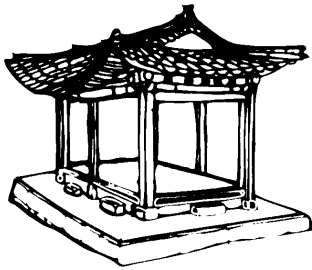
a. Poetry The collective feelings of a people are embodied in their poetry. Development of individuals and society at large is dependent on poetic expression.

b. Social outlook The importance of ritual, the concern for verbal and non-verbal communication within a society, must be taught through whatever creative means are available. That different behavior was called for in specific social and societal setting became a key perspective.

c. History

The historical memory, a long and strenuous process, is a part of the collective consciousness. Political and cultural decision must recognize this long-standing tradition.

d. All-encompassing politic No area of life is outside the dimension of political responsibility. Commonplace events of life--as well as matters of spiritual importance--all must include a collective political dimension.



"[There] is no church, no temple, and no shrine that is actually or symbolically removed from the political or social arenas of ordinary life." (Our Religions, p. 195.)

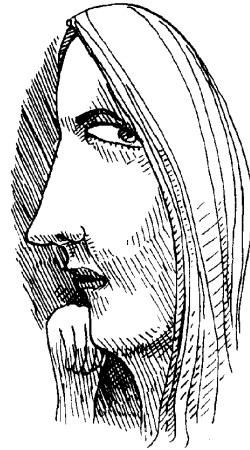
e. Philosophy The interconnectedness of all human activity--language, politics, nature, the spiritual--is a central philosophical connection. All dimensions of the world (and the heavenly) are bound together in an interconnected whole.

3. Te (duh) Te, the virtue or power by which a ruler possesses authority, applies to political practice.

Popular trust--the example set, character upheld, integrity demonstrated and authenticity employed--is critical for those who would lead. A head of state's influence is most profound. Through example and precept, he clarifies spiritual values and human virtues for both governed and governors.

Another dimension of Chinese politics is the principle, summarized under the slogan "the mandate from Heaven," whereby the emperor (supreme ruler) and his family carry out heavenly policy.

Ordinary citizens thus see rulers as divine, semi-natural, semi-personal forces. The aura of the divine surrounds them. (See Stephen Teiser, "The Spirits of Chinese Religion," in Donald Lopez, Religions of China in Practice, p. 29.)



4. Cultural Excellence As stated by Huston Smith:

The evidence of a highly esteemed state is the one that has *"the finest art, the noblest philosophy, the grandest poetry, and gives evidence of realizing that 'it is the moral character of a neighborhood that constitutes its excellence.'"* (The World's Religions, p. 180.)

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The six arts--ritual, music, marksmanship, horsemanship, calligraphy and mathematics--while practiced individually, combine to build a strong society. Victory, over the long haul, eventually goes to the state developing the highest culture.

5. Current Influence Harvard professor Dr. Samuel Huntington, in his book The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, describes the current, prevailing influence of Confucian values in the East Asian (Sinic) world.

Dr. Huntington recognizes differences among Asian societies and civilizations, yet sees the value system of Confucius--with attendant emphasis on thrift, family, work and discipline--as significant in the region.

In commenting on China's redefinition of its role in world affairs in the late 1970s, Dr. Huntington writes, China "set two goals: to become the Champion of Chinese [Confucian] culture...and to resume its historical position, which it lost in the nineteenth century, as the [supreme] power in East Asia." (The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order, p. 169; see also p. 108.)

IV. Islam

"How are the domains of spiritual and political authority delineated in Islam? This question approaches one of the most fundamental, most searing, most debated, and as a result, most embroiled issues in Islamic thought."

-- Mohammad Arkoun, Rethinking Islam, p. 68.



"Islam is divided into various groups, each with its own interpretation of the Muslim holy book--the Qur'an--and the prophet Muhammad's sayings and deeds."

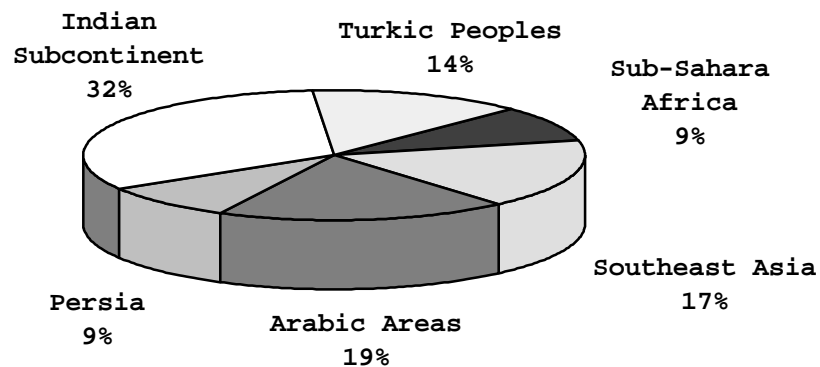
--Lt.Col. David Kibble, Military Review, 1995, p. 40.

1. Islam Outside the Middle East

The presence of Islam amongst Arabic, Persian, and Turkic peoples seems commonly known. Less understood, but equally important, is the Muslim presence in the Indian subcontinent, sub-Sahara Africa and Southeast Asia. Also, Islamic influence in the West is increasingly felt.

World Muslim Population

1,080,000,000 People



Source: Seyyed Nasr, 'Islam,' in Our Religions

a. Indian Subcontinent Islam comprises a majority presence in Bangladesh, with minorities in Sri Lanka, Nepal, and India. Mission oriented Sufi orders and Muslim traders brought Islam to these areas in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Over 350 million Muslim adherents live in these areas.

b. Sub-Saharan Africa Since Muhammad's time, when Bilal, an African, called the Prophet to prayer, Islam has had an interest and presence in Africa. One hundred million followers of Muhammad practice Islam in this part of the African continent.

c. Southeast Asia

In the thirteenth century, Sufi teachers, pious merchants, and members of the Prophet's family who married into Malay royalty spread Islam throughout Southeast Asia. The 180 million practitioners in Indonesia, Malaysia, South Philippines and minorities elsewhere often follow a more syncretistic (blended, including other beliefs or practices) strain of Islam.

Writes principal investigator Dr. Donald Weatherbee in The Political Impact of Islam in Southeast Asia, *"Heterodox Islam [in Southeast Asia] is represented by syncretic practices and beliefs deviating from the sunna, arising out of persistent pre-Islamic folk-belief and [indigenous] practices, the residuum of Hinduism and Buddhism, the overlapping of Sufi mysticism with indigenously-based Gnostic survivals, and other variants from universal Shafi'i sanctioned ritual and behavior."* (p. 5)

2. Clergy/Leadership

Though Islam is a "religion of lay people without priesthood...a society in which all the members enjoy equal religious status" (Jacques Jomier, How to Understand Islam, p. 58), there are learned elites, community leaders, and public officials who promote and ensure good moral behavior in society.

Ulama (oo-la-mah) Leadership centers around the ulama. These learned men are responsible for interpreting divine law and administering Islamic society. Some of the ulama are experts in the study of sacred texts, the tradition associated with exegesis of the Qur'an, and the **hadith** (hah-DEETH, the tradition of what Muhammad and his companions said and did). Theology, law, and mysticism are also part of the curriculum for individuals desiring to become part of this select group.



Ulama personnel serve as teachers, preachers, market-inspectors, judges, notaries, and in various state positions--as scribes, secretaries, and royal counsels. Even in states where secular law is in effect, the cooperation of the ulama is necessary for successful government.

A wide variety of other titled men can make up the ulama. An imam (i-MAHM) leads prayers for the faithful. At times, imams also derive authority from their abilities in religious scholarship. A muezzin (moo-uh-TH-thin) is the crier who calls worshippers to prayer. Muftis (MUF-tees), scholars in Islamic law, present fatwa, formal decisions given on legal, moral, or doctrinal questions. Often the procedures for arriving at consensus are complex and intricate. Mujahidun (moo-ja-hid-OON) are present day activists who seek to revive Islamic society.

Mullahs (MUL-luhs) are local Shi'ite men of religion. An ayatollah (a-yat-ool-LAH) is a mullah who achieves the highest level of leadership in the Shia community through extensive academic study.

Historically, caliphs (KAY-lifs) provided religious and civil leadership to Muslim communities from A.D. 632 to the mid-thirteenth century. In practice, kings, sultans, and the ulama took over caliph powers from the ninth century onward.



"Friends of God" or popular saints are called wali or marabouts (MAHR-eh-boots). Locals often see these holy individuals as possessing spiritual/mystical powers and seek out their prayers and blessings. Though condemned in some orthodox Islamic circles, pilgrimages to these living saints or visits to the tombs of their dead still occur.

In the Muslim world, two major schools of thought, the Sunni (SOON-nee) and Shia (SHEE-uh) are present. The origin of these groups centers more on political viewpoints than dogma. Early responses to the question "Who leads at the death of Muhammad? defined the differences in these two movements.

3. Political Life

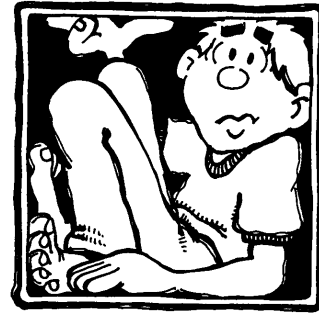
"Beyond the minimum common structures of belief and practice in Islam in Southeast Asia...there [is] the ideal Islamic way of life ranging from the nominal profession of faith to strict compliance with all of the demands of the sharia; from syncretic accommodation to indigenous cultural heritage to the conscious adoption of the Arab model."

--Political Impact of Islam in Southeast Asia, pp. 4-5.

The relation between Islam and political life is complex. There is no compartmentalized secular/spiritual dichotomy within Islam. The entire world is a spiritual reality, permeated by religion.

God is all powerful over human affairs. The Prophethood and Sharia are the basis for political life. Deputyship, an expression of the dominion humankind demonstrates over this world, is fulfilled through the religious leaders--the ulama.

The following questions address some of the religio-political tensions currently raised within many Middle Eastern countries.

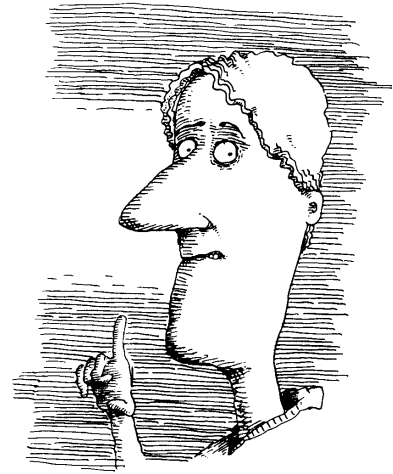


- After experiencing some form of colonial rule for most of the twentieth century, how can Muslim dominated countries now oversee their own affairs, implementing some degree of Islamic government?
- How does an Islamic society react to or integrate the sweeping results of industrialization?
- In what ways do aggressively militant religionists fit in with more conciliatory fellow believers?
- Can authentic religious and cultural integrity be maintained through perceptions of loss-- whether in status, dignity, belief, or lifestyle?
- What degree of tolerance is allowed for misbelievers when they rule over true believers?

4. Sharia/Hadith

Dr. Kamil Said, Naval Postgraduate School instructor in Islamic affairs, gives the following description of the Sharia (Islamic Law).

"The Sharia prescribes directives for the regulation for the individual as well as collective life. These directives touch every aspect of life as religious rituals, personal character, habits, morals, family life, social and economic affairs, administration, rights and duties of citizens, judicial system, laws of war and peace and international relations.

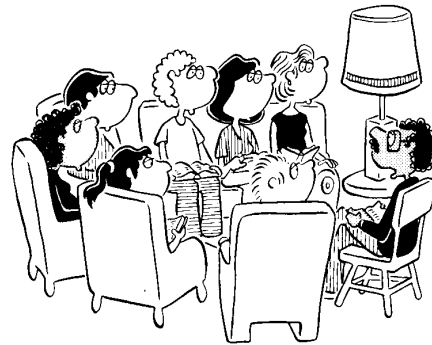


These directives reveal what is good and bad, and what is beneficial and useful and what is injurious and harmful.

The Sharia is a complete system of life and an all-embracing social order.

The Muslim thought of a good society is that where Sharia law would be enforced by the state.

Hadith were collected on the initiative of the Compilers. Each one of [the hadith] had to be critically examined and accepted by the community before being recognized as an authoritative work." (pp. 20-21, Syllabus, Islamic Civilization, NS 4300.)



5. The Four Major Schools of the Sharia

a. Hanafite (HA-nuh-fit) These followers of Imam Abu Hanifa (d. 767) are found in Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, China, North Africa, Egypt, and in the Malay Archipelago. Broad-minded without being lax, this school appeals to reason (personal judgment) and a quest for the better. It is

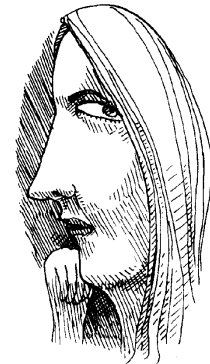
generally tolerant and the largest movement within Islam.

b. Malikite (MA-li-kit) Following the tradition of Imam Malik (d. 795), this school appeals to "common utility...the idea of the common good." Arabia, North and West Africa, Upper Egypt and the Sudan is the location.

c. Shafiite (sha-FI-it) Al Shafii's (d. 855) thought influenced Indonesia, Southern Arabia, Lower Egypt, parts of Syria, Palestine, Eastern Africa, India and South Africa. Tradition, the consensus of the Muslim community and reasoning by analogy are characteristics of this school.

d. Hanbalite (HAHN-buh-leyet) Imam Hanbal (d. 855), from Baghdad, followed a strict interpretation of the Sharia. Strong in present day Arabia, especially Saudi Arabia, Hanbal thought influenced the revivalist ibn Abd al-Wahhab.

6. Western Misperceptions



The Prince of Wales, in a speech entitled "Islam and the West," addressed the Oxford Center for Islamic Studies, 27 Oct 1993. Prince Charles said the following concerning Western perspectives on Sharia.

"[P]eople...frequently argue that the sharia law of the Islamic world is cruel, barbaric and unjust. Our newspapers, above all, love to peddle those unthinking prejudices.

The truth is, of course, different and always more complex.

My own understanding is that extremes are rarely practiced. The guiding principles and spirit of Islamic law, taken straight from the Qur'an, are those of equity and compassion. We need to study its actual application before we make judgments...

We must distinguish between systems of justice administered with integrity, and systems of justice as we may see them practiced which have been deformed for political reasons into something no longer Islamic. We must bear in mind the sharp debate taking place in the Islamic world itself about the degree to which the application of that law is continually changing and evolving." (NS 3300, pp. 60,61.)

7. Islamic Responses to the West

George Gawrych, art of war in the Middle East instructor at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, identifies three broad responses within Islam to Western challenges: secularism, fundamentalism, and modernism.

a. Secularism These countries seek to keep Islam separate from politics. Nationalism/secularism is the primary force in modern history. The state imposes no Islamic practice upon society. Religion becomes a matter of private conscience. "Secularists argue that Islam only suffers when rulers or religious institutions use the faith for political ends. Religious leaders should concern themselves with 'saving souls' and upholding society's moral order." (Military Review, Sep 95, p. 35.) Turkey is a modern secular state.

b. Fundamentalism These followers believe in absolute religious and political unity. *"Everything must be under Islamic Law's rule, as it was in Muhammad's time in Medina."*



All state institutions must be clearly and unequivocally Islamic, including the armed forces. Wars must be conducted for ideological and cultural, not national, ends." (MR, p. 35.) Saudi Arabia and Iran could be classified in this movement.

c. Modernism This is the middle ground between the above extremes. While not following a rigid separation of religion and politics, modernists also do not fuse them together. The legal system balances Islamic and natural law. *"Patriotism and nationalism sometimes appear to hold greater sway than Islamic ideology. Egypt and Jordan are modernist states."* (MR, p. 36.)

8. Islamic and Southeast Asian Politics In their discussion entitled The Political Impact of Islam in Southeast Asia, chief investigator Dr. Donald Weatherbee enumerated the following three trends of thought in describing Islam's political impact on the countries of Southeast Asia.

a. Radical Fundamentalists These extremists often look beyond the actual meaning of the Qur'an and interpret it for political purposes. Islam becomes "politicized."

Radical fundamentalist advocates take the sharia as an uncompromisable whole. It cannot be adjusted to meet political contingencies or change with the times.

The struggle between Islam and the non-Islamic state is a total, all encompassing one. Fundamentalism's influence is far out of proportion to its number of actual adherents.

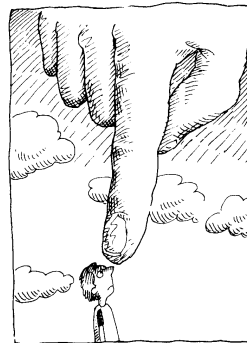


b. Traditionalist This trend of thought makes accommodation to political realities. Though trying to project Sharia influence on increasingly larger societal circles, traditionalists nonetheless realize that they often live in secularist states.

c. Reformist These practitioners would adjust the sharia to the complexities of modernity, shaping Islam to suit the modern world.

"Reformist Islam seeks to accommodate science, technology, the demands of an industrializing economy, etc.--all of the appurtenances of a modern society--by going back to the source in an original fashion."

Reformist Islam seeks to meet the challenge of modernization in all its dimensions, unlike traditionalist Islam increasingly confined to the Mosque and religion narrowly defined. The major social-base of reformist Islam is in the urban centered Muslim entrepreneurial class." (p. 6)



"Vow to do your best."

Vocabulary List: Religion and East Asian Politics

Ayatollah (a-yat-ool-LAH) A mullah who achieves the highest level of leadership in the Shia community through extensive academic study

Caliphs (KAY-lifs) Historic leaders who provided religious and civil leadership in Muslim communities from A.D. 632 to the mid-thirteenth century. In practice, kings, sultans, and the ulama took over caliph powers from the ninth century onward.

Hadith (hah-DEETH) Traditions of what Muhammad and his companions said and did

Hanbalite (HAHN-buh-leyet) Imam Hanbal (d. 855), from Baghdad, followed a strict interpretation of the Sharia. Strong in present day Arabia, especially Saudi Arabia, Hanbal thought influenced the revivalist ibn Abd al-Wahhab.

Marabouts (MAHR-eh-boots) "Friends of God" or popular saints. Locals often see these holy individuals as possessing spiritual/mystical powers and seek out their prayers and blessings. Though condemned in some orthodox Islamic circles, pilgrimages to these living saints or visits to the tombs of their dead still occur.

Muezzin (moo-uh-TH-thin) The crier who calls worshippers to prayer

Mufti (MUF-tee) Scholars in Islamic law

Mujahidun (moo-ja-hid-OON) Present day activists who seek to revive Islamic society

Mullahs (MUL-luhs) Local Shi'ite men of religion

Sharia (sha-REE-ah) Religious law of Islam

Shia (SHEE-uh) Followers who believe Muhammad specified that his cousin and son-in-law Ali would be his successor. The charisma of Muhammad passed on in direct blood lineage through a family dynasty. Religious and political authority rests in imams alone.

Sufi (SOO-fee) Within both Sunni and Shia circles there are branches of mystical/spiritual intensity. This school of thought defines the Sufi mystic orientation. "Like the heart of the body of Islam--invisible from the outside but giving nourishment to the whole organism," so the pietism of this school exerts an influence on all Islam.

Sunni (SOON-nee) Elders who saw Muhammad's successor as chosen by the community of those who follow the ethical/religious Muslim path. Authority rests in the community, guided by ulama consensus and Islamic law.

Review Quiz: Religion and East Asian Politics



Part 1--Multiple Choice Place the letter of the most correct response in the blank provided.

1. _____ Shia Islam is practiced in
 - a. Sub-Sahara Africa.
 - b. Iran, south Iraq, parts of Lebanon and in smaller elements of Islam elsewhere.
 - c. Southeast Asia.
2. _____ Within Shia Islam, religious and political authority rests with the _____ alone.
 - a. imams
 - b. premiers
 - c. kings
3. _____ _____ mystics and pietists can be found in both Sunni and Shia Islamic circles.
 - a. Sufi
 - b. Mufti
 - c. Ulama
4. _____ Response to what question led to the establishment of Sunni and Shia schools of thought within Islam?
 - a. How literally do we interpret the Qur'an?
 - b. Who leads at the death of Muhammad?
 - c. When does the month of Ramadan occur?
5. _____ _____ elders see Muhammad's successors as being chosen by the community who follow the ethical/religious path.
 - a. Shia
 - b. Sunni
 - c. "Twelvers"

6. _____ What approximate percentage of the Muslim world follows the Sunni branch?

- a. 35%
- b. 50%
- c. 85%

7. _____ elders believe successors to Muhammad must follow from a direct blood lineage from the Prophet himself.

- a. Sunni
- b. Shia
- c. Marabout

8. _____ The Shia school of thought makes up what approximate percentage of Islam as a whole?

- a. 5%
- b. 30%
- c. 15%

9. _____ In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, mission-oriented Sufi orders and Muslim traders brought Islam to

- a. Spain.
- b. Egypt.
- c. the Indian subcontinent.

10. _____ Within Shia Islam a/an _____ is a man of religion, known for his extensive academic study, who is looked upon as achieving the highest level of scholarship.

- a. imam
- b. mujahidun
- c. ayatollah

11. _____ lead the Islamic masses in prayers and preach in mosques.

- a. Muezzin
- b. Imam
- c. Fatwa

Unit 6: Religion and East Asian Politics

12. _____ or "Friends of God" enjoy a status similar to that of a popular saint. Pilgrimages to their graves may occur in some Islamic circles.
- a. Marabouts
 - b. Caliphs
 - c. Shariah
13. _____ Saudi Arabia and Iran could be classified as _____ religious/political states.
- a. secularist
 - b. fundamentalist
 - c. modernist
14. _____ Egypt and _____ are modernist, Islamic states.
- a. Iraq
 - b. Libya
 - c. Jordan
15. _____ In classic Buddhist practice, what was the unwritten policy between governments and the sangha?
- a. Kings protected the sangha receiving formal and informal support from them in return.
 - b. The sangha often raised a prophetic voice against the government.
 - c. Kings ignored the sangha.
16. _____ One consequence of Taoist influence on politics was
- a. rulers concerned themselves with the prominent, impressive members of their communities.
 - b. rulers concerned themselves with the lowly, poorer members of their communities.
 - c. environmental concerns were top priority.
17. _____ Classic Taoist governmental ideals sought influence by
- a. bribes and schemes of personal favors.
 - b. aggressive, direct, up-front persuasion.
 - c. indirection, nuance and suggestion.

18. _____ Confucian political thought
- a. sought out transcending values found in Chinese custom and practice.
 - b. advocated a policy of political detachment.
 - c. threw aside all Taoist understanding.
19. _____ In Confucian thought--poetry, history, communication and philosophy have
- a. nothing to do with political activity.
 - b. are outside the parameters of politics.
 - c. are intricately interconnected to political activity.
20. _____ What is an example of syncretism in belief?
- a. The blending of Taoist and Confucian thought when applied to Chinese politics.
 - b. Islam's five pillars.
 - c. Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism.
-

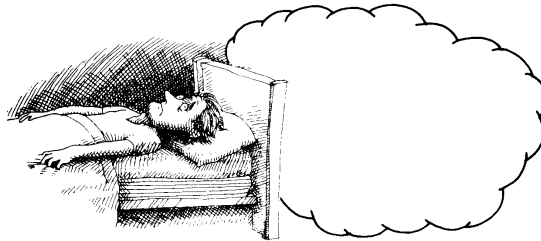
Part 2--True/False Place a T or F in the blank provided.



1. _____ Political expressions of Islam present a monolithic whole, being the same throughout countries of the Middle East.
2. _____ Islam practice and thought in SE Asia often includes elements of other belief systems within its way of life.
3. _____ Islam is a religion of lay people without a priesthood. All members enjoy equal religious status before God.
4. _____ Throughout Islamic history, many ulama have led their people against external invasions and internal tyranny.
5. _____ The relationship between Islam and political life is straightforward and simple.

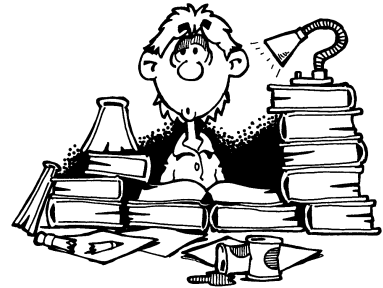
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6. _____ Within Islam, the entire world is a spiritual reality, permeated by religion.
7. _____ The Sharia applies only to personal ethics and spiritual concerns.
8. _____ Each one of the hadith underwent a critical examination by the scholarly Islamic community before being recognized as authoritative.
9. _____ In southeast Asia, government leaders routinely overlook the impact of Buddhism upon their societies.
10. _____ Confucian thought sees some areas of life as distinctly political, while others are well outside the boundaries of political responsibility.



"Dream...think...become."

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Resources for Further Study

In addition to bibliographies listed in Units 7 (U.S. Relations), 8 (Fundamentalisms) and 12 (Country Studies), see the following:

Berkey, Jonathan, "What Connects Kabul to Los Angeles?," (New York Times, Letter to the Editor, 3 OCT 1996), p. A14.

A thought-provoking letter treating the diversity found within Sharia throughout the world.

Bernstein, Richard, "From a Chinese Prison, Thoughtful Defiance," (New York Times, 12 May 1997), p. B1.

Review of The Courage to Stand Alone--Letter from Prison and Other Writings by Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng.

Grinter, Lawrence, Realities of Revolutionary Violence in Southeast Asia--Challenges and Responses, (Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama: Air University Press, 1990).

Reuters, "104 Are Held in Malaysia After East Timor Meeting," (New York Times, 9 Nov 1997), p. A.

Sciolino, Elaine, "The Many Faces of Islamic Law," (New York Times, 27 Oct 1996), p. E4.

A helpful, succinct explanation of the variety expressed by Sharia throughout the Middle East. An excellent overview of the subject.

Tyler, Patrick, "Catholic in China: Back to the Underground," (New York Times, 1997), p. A1.

Tyler, Patrick, "Chinese Muslims Recount Their Days of Terror," (New York Times, 10 Nov 1996), p. A3.



"Books are an important part of any...leader's professional development...I tell people that history strengthens me...read to relax, to learn, and to expand your horizons."
(General Gordon R. Sullivan)